



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
Dec. 16, 2009

For More Information, Contact:
Dawn Mayer
Division of Injury Prevention and Control
North Dakota Department of Health
Phone: 701.328.4536
E-mail: drmayer@nd.gov

Ten Tips To Keep Your Holiday Home Fire and Injury Free *Fires Lead the List of Hazards Related to Holiday Decorating*

BISMARCK, N.D. – As the holiday season approaches, North Dakota Department of Health is urging consumers to make safety a factor in holiday decorating. Whether it is careful candle placement or checking the warning label on the holiday lights, simple safety steps can go a long way in preventing fires and injuries.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), each year during the two months surrounding the holiday season, more than 14,000 people are treated in hospital emergency rooms due to injuries related to holiday decorating. In addition, Christmas trees are involved in hundreds of fires, resulting in an average of 15 deaths and \$13 million dollars in property damage annually. Candle-related fires lead the list of hazards, averaging more than 12,000 a year and resulting in 150 deaths and \$393 million in property damage.

“Holiday decorating-related fires and injuries most often involve defective holiday lights, unattended candles and dried-out Christmas trees,” said Dawn Mayer of the Department of Health’s Division of Injury Prevention and Control. “Following this list of 10 simple safety steps can help keep your home – and your family – safe this holiday season.”

Follow these safety tips when decorating this year:

- **Trees and Decorations**
 - When purchasing an artificial tree, DO look for the label “Fire Resistant.” Although this label does not mean the tree won’t catch fire, it does indicate the tree is more resistant to catching fire.
 - When purchasing a live tree, DO check for freshness. A fresh tree is green with needles that are hard to pull from the branches and that do not break when bent between your fingers. The bottom of a fresh tree is sticky with resin, and when tapped on the ground, the tree should not lose many needles.

-- more --

600 E. Boulevard Ave. Dept. 301, Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0200
Phone: 701.328.2372 Fax: 701.328.4727 E-mail: health@nd.gov

Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

- When setting up a tree at home, DO place it away from heat sources such as fireplaces, vents and radiators. Because heated rooms dry out live trees rapidly, be sure to monitor water levels and keep the stand filled with water. Place the tree out of the way of traffic, and do not block doorways.
- In homes with small children, DO take special care to avoid sharp, weighted or breakable decorations; keep trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of children who could swallow or inhale small pieces; and avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food that may tempt a child to eat them.
- **Lights**
 - Indoors or outside, DO use only lights that have been tested for safety by a nationally recognized testing laboratory, such as UL or ETL/ITSNA.
 - Check each set of lights, new or old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections. Throw out damaged sets. DON'T use electric lights on a metallic tree.
 - If using an extension cord, DO make sure it is rated for the intended use.
 - When using lights outdoors, DO check labels to be sure the lights have been certified for outdoor use and plug them only into a ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) protected receptacle or a portable GFCI.
- **Candles**
 - Keep burning candles within sight. DO extinguish all candles before you go to bed, leave the room or leave the house.
 - DO keep lighted candles away from items that can catch fire and burn easily, such as trees, other evergreens, decorations, curtains and furniture.

A free brochure with more holiday decorating safety tips is available on CPSC's website: www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/611.pdf.

For more information about holiday decorating safety, contact Dawn Mayer, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.4536.

-- 30 --

Please note: To access archived news releases and other information, visit the North Dakota Department of Health Press Room at www.nddohpressroom.gov.